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(Commentary by Washington correspondent John Tipring, read by Pablo Bravo)

The dispersal of U.S. forces led the U.S. army chief of staff to express his concern during an interview in THE NEW YORK TIMES this week. In his statements, General Wickham expressed fears that at a given moment the United States may not be able to comply with all of its military commitments abroad if some contingencies require sending more troops to other parts of the world.

The White House apparently denied the existence of this type of problem. The denial, however, is not sufficient to convince a public that still remembers false denials during the Watergate scandal and those related to the Vietnam war.

Meanwhile, Libya's Colonel Al-Qadhdhafi seems determined to discover whether the United States and France are prepared to reach the ultimate consequence, that is, to send combat troops to Chad.

It remains to be seen if other U.S. adversaries will simultaneously decide to test the warnings issued by the Reagan administration in such distant countries as Peru, Colombia, Somalia, Italy, Saudi Arabia, and others where the common denominator is the instability of pro-American governments.